## Chapter XIII

# What To Do With a C.O.W. in the Classroom

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The Computers on Wheels project began at the College of St. Catherine as a collaborative venture between the Dean of Education and the McGlynn Computer and Technology Center. We in Computing Services were interested in finding out how a wireless network (LAN) could function in a classroom building. Faculty members in the Education Department were interested in experimenting with the use of laptop computers in teaching and learning. At the same time, we made the decision to set up similar equipment in the library for checkout from the Circulation Desk to use within the building to do a variety of research related tasks such as word processing, printing, and Internet access.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THIS CHAPTER OF THE SECTION

The purpose of this chapter of the section is to: (1) describe the preparation involved in setting up the Computer On Wheels project; (2) outline the initial uses of the technology at the College of St. Catherine; and (3) suggest possible instructional strategies for using wireless LANs in the classroom.

# PREPARATION

## Faculty Study Group

The Dean of Education and the Assistant Director of Instructional Technology created a faculty study group (FSG) with funds from Computing Services. The Director of the McGlynn Computer and Technology Center provided 24 laptops and a locked cart to house the computers and the network as well as provided a monthly lunch for a group of 15 faculty members in Mendel Hall. This building is home to the Education Department as well as the departments of Math and Sciences, Occupational Therapy, and Psychology. The FSG was made up primarily of Education faculty members with representatives from Math and Psychology. The group began meeting in September 2000. Our goal, as a group, was to explore how the laptops and the wireless network could be used in the classroom. Additionally, we were interested in integrating the electronic whiteboard, video data projector, digital camera, and other devices into our instruction.

## Classroom Renovation

At the same time our FSG was getting started, the Vice President and Academic Dean provided funding to be used for classroom renovation and technology. We were able to upgrade three classrooms in Mendel Hall and three rooms in another classroom building. The Education Department also received a grant for technology in teacher training. These funds were used to purchase flexible furniture, electrical wiring, wireless LAN components, electronic whiteboards, and video data projectors. We also purchased a printer, a digital camera, two document cameras, and a flatbed scanner for use in the classroom.

## Faculty Mentor Program

To help support classroom technology usage, we began a faculty mentor program in February 2001. We hired a faculty member in each classroom building to consult with and assist other faculty members using technology in their classes. With funding from the Director of the McGlynn Computer and Technology Center, we were able to fund one course release for each faculty mentor. We paired each mentor with a staff member in Computing Services. We asked the mentors to work ten hours a week on the project, keep a log of their activities, attend special faculty mentor training sessions organized by the Computing Services staff, and offer a weekly brown bag lunch for faculty in their buildings.

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